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Statement submitted by Company of the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul, Congregation of the Mission, International Association of Charities, International Confederation of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul and Sisters of Charity Federation, non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

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Statement

As the 63rd Commission on the Status of Women considers "social protection systems, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls", the undersigned organizations with special Economic and Social Council status wish to bring to the attention of this Commission the critical need to address the multifaceted problem of housing exclusion and street homelessness of women and girls. This issue is pivotal in dealing with social protections, in advancing toward the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030 and has specific gender concerns which must be addressed.

We urge the Commission to focus on unsheltered homelessness and access to adequate housing in its discussion of social protection policies by:

Calling upon Member States to provide adequate shelter to all persons regardless of gender, age, disability, legal, institutional, or socio-economic status that is safe, secure, and accessible; and to measure and monitor the extent of homelessness, particularly unsheltered homelessness among women;

Urging regional and global stakeholders to promote efforts to assess progress toward ending homelessness in a way that is meaningful and consistent across all countries, including support of practices of enumerating the homeless population, particularly the unsheltered population, with gender disaggregated data to provide a benchmark from which Member States can mark progress toward the progressive right to housing.

Unsheltered homelessness affects all groupings — men and women, families with children, youth, the elderly, and people with disabilities. It occurs in most nations — wealthy and poor — across the globe. It has severe negative impacts on both individuals and on cities, and particularly on women.

Each of the Economic and Social Council non-governmental organisation who collaboratively developed this statement work internationally to serve and advocate for people who are economically poor and frail. A few examples of the work of the International Association of Charities highlights some of the concerns of women experiencing homelessness.

In Madagascar', "A roof first" project in Manakara, began in 2007, and serves homeless women, often single mothers with children, who are widowed or who have been abandoned by their husbands, and who are found sleeping on the streets. These women are excluded from homes because of discriminatory laws and particularly inheritance laws that provide that the marital household becomes the property of the husband's family on his death, rather than his spouse.

In La Chacarita, Paraguay, a project helps women to finish primary education and learn trades such as cooking and sewing, so they can make and sell cloth bags for bread. But these women are affected by flooding and other environmental factors in the area that are gaining in intensity. Governments need to help get residents relocated to a safe area, so they can pursue their education and livelihood.

For 14 years, in Antibes France, a group has been running a shelter with five studio apartments providing temporary accommodation for women who are victims of domestic violence. The aim is that at the end of their stay they can find themselves salaried work and a home of their own. However, the demand cannot meet the need and often cannot provide for women with more than one child.

In Turin, Italy, several groups have projects working with homeless women or women at risk of homelessness who are recent migrants to the area. Women and

especially young girls are at risk of trafficking if they wander the streets and lack safe and secure housing and access to language skills and the means to earn a living.

In addition, throughout the world, there are many examples of collaboration between the Daughters of Charity, the Sisters of Charity and the International Association of Charities who work to provide housing for elderly women who are abandoned by their families. The needs of elderly women far exceed the resources needed to adequately house them. Elderly women comprise one of the fastest growing demographics of unsheltered homeless.

As we reviewed the past decade of priority themes and advance quickly toward the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Platform for action, we note that there has been little emphasis on the issue of homeless women. Yet we know that this issue is foundational to achieving an adequate standard of living and basic human rights as defined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (GA 1948), the International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights (GA 1966), as well as the Convention for the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (1979). These documents all recognize the right to an adequate standard of living, including adequate food, clothing and housing, as well as access to education and health care.

Several United Nations agreements already acknowledge the key role of housing and shelter.

- Sustainable Development Goal 11, indicator 11.1: "By 2030, ensure access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services and upgrade slums."
- The 2016 New Urban Agenda: "We will take positive measures to improve the living conditions of homeless people with a view of facilitating their full participation in society and to prevent and eliminate homelessness."
- The 1996 Istanbul Declaration on Human Settlements: "... everyone will have adequate shelter that is healthy, safe, secure, accessible and affordable and that includes basic services, facilities and amenities."

Despite clear recognition that housing and shelter are central to meeting human potential, the Commission on the Status of Women has not focused on this important issue highlighting the specific needs of women and girls. A discussion in this session concerning social protections would play a key role in remedying this to ensure no one is left behind as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development moves forward.

Adequate housing is a core component of social protection. Social protection floors are designed to protect individuals and countries from shocks and other stresses by providing an adequate, basic standard of living to vulnerable populations. In addition to ensuring a basic income and access to healthcare, housing must be considered as a key component of ensuring individuals have a basic standard of living. According to "Social Protection: A Coherent Strategy for Shared Prosperity," the CSocD56 Civil Society Declaration, "it is patently clear that people cannot make meaningful contributions to societal development if they are ... fighting simply for basic survival." People experiencing street homelessness in every corner of the globe face negative outcomes related to mortality, health, ability to earn a basic income and other basic elements of survival. Homelessness is debilitating and often lethal for women.

In conclusion, we urge member states and this Commission to take steps to remedy the exclusion of street homelessness of women in this debate by situating the issue within the conversation around social protection floors and exploring the challenges street homelessness poses to women and to meeting the objectives of the 2030 Agenda's call for gender equality and empowerment for women and girls and

an end to poverty. We call for a clear, global measurement of street homelessness; a shared goal to reduce and ultimately end street homelessness; and support for a global movement to spread effective strategies across member states.

Company of the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent De Paul

Congregation of the Mission

International Association of Charities

International Confederation of the Society of St. Vincent DePaul

Sisters of Charity Federation